

SUPPLEMENT TO THE NONCONFORMIST.

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[GRATIS.]

THE POLITICS OF NONCONFORMITY.**LECTURE BY MR. R. W. DALE, M.A.**

On Tuesday night, Nov. 21, Mr. R. W. Dale, M.A., of Birmingham, delivered a lecture in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, under the auspices of the Manchester Nonconformist Association, on "The Politics of Nonconformity."* The great hall was filled to its utmost capacity. Mr. R. Johnson occupied the chair, and on the platform were most of the leading Nonconformists and friends of religious liberty in Manchester and the district, among them being Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P., and Mr. A. Illingworth, M.P. The Chairman briefly introduced

Mr. DALE, who was received with great cheering, and who said : Three years ago, when we were just emerging from the excitement of that great contest which determined the fate of the Ecclesiastical Establishment in Ireland, there were many Nonconformists who, in the enthusiasm of their delight, supposed that the protracted struggle for perfect religious equality in the Empire was near its final triumph. There was a presumptuous hope that the principles of justice which the Liberal party was pledged to apply to the Established Church in Ireland, would, before very long, determine its policy in relation to the Established Churches of England and Scotland. Even those of us who were less sanguine believed that we might rely on Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Gladstone's Government not to augment the disadvantages under which English Nonconformists were already suffering, and not to create new difficulties to impede the gradual development of the principle of religious liberty. At the close of the last general election Mr. Gladstone was regarded by Nonconformists with passionate admiration and with unmeasured confidence. Speaking for myself, I must declare that my admiration for the genius of the leader of the Liberal party is undiminished, and my confidence in his integrity is unshaken. But the relations of the Nonconformists to Mr. Gladstone's Government have undergone a great and startling change. Confidence has given place to distrust, and enthusiasm to resentment. The Ministry we so perfectly trusted has already, in the judgment of many of us, inflicted upon Nonconformity a great wrong. Its future policy is regarded with apprehension. During the last few months announcement after announcement has appeared in the columns of the newspapers of the formation of Nonconformist committees in one great town after another, from Newcastle to Plymouth, for resisting what are alleged to be the offences already committed by Mr. Gladstone's Government against the principles of religious equality, and to avert offences graver still, which seem likely to be committed before many months are over. Conferences are being called together in the north and in the south, in the east and in the west, to deliberate on the policy which Nonconformists should follow, and to concentrate and organise their power for a conflict which seems inevitable. There is universal alarm, and the alarm is greatest in those parts of the country where, three years ago, the confidence in Mr. Gladstone's Government was most hearty. The zeal, the energy, and the self-sacrifice of the Nonconformists, contributed very much to the winning of the magnificent triumph of the Liberal party at the last election ; and now those who are watching most carefully the movement of the public mind, are predicting that the Liberal party is in danger of being broken to pieces by Nonconformist discontent. The causes of this singular change are not far to seek. It appears that justice was to be done in Ireland, because injustice had made the government of Ireland by peaceful and constitutional means impossible. But justice is still to be delayed in England, because those who suffer wrong in this country are men capable of an almost inexhaustible endurance ; and it is their settled habit and their immovable purpose to secure the redress of their grievances—not by disturbing the public peace, but by endeavouring to convince the judgment and awaken the conscience of the nation. To that work the Nonconformists in every part of the kingdom are addressing themselves ; and I heartily congratulate the Nonconformists of this great city, which has borne so illustrious a part in the political history of the empire, that they are

* The same lecture, we may here say, was repeated at the Town Hall, Birmingham, on Friday evening.

in the van of the movement. If I understand the present temper and disposition of Nonconformists, they are rapidly coming to the determination not to be satisfied with the defence and illustration of their principles in public meetings, and by all those means through which the opinion of the country is gradually influenced ; but to adopt a definite line of political action. We have hitherto been content to accept a subordinate place in the Liberal party. We have very seldom taken a separate and independent position at elections. Our political leaders have never been asked to pledge themselves to our abstract principles. It is not professed that Nonconformist electors in every constituency in the country should insist on the acceptance of their abstract principles by every candidate for their suffrages. No such dictatorial spirit, so far as I know, has ever yet been manifested even by those whose indignation at the recent policy of the Government is most vehement. We do not claim to represent the majority of the Liberal party throughout the kingdom. But in many constituencies we constitute such an overwhelming majority of the Liberal electors, that we think we have a right to claim that Liberal candidates shall accept our principles in all their breadth, and be prepared to carry them to their ultimate issue as the condition of our support. In other constituencies we are so necessary to the Liberal party, that we think we have a right to demand that Liberal candidates shall at least pledge themselves to resist any new violations of those principles of religious equality which we regard as a sacred trust, and which we are under the most solemn obligations to defend. For the sake of the nation, to turn aside any great danger which menaced national safety, to secure the success of any great measure urgently necessary to the national well-being, we should be prepared to waive our claims ; but we are not prepared to waive them for the sake of the Liberal party. We are told of what the Liberal party had done for us in past times ; we have done as much for the Liberal party as the Liberal party has done for us. If there is any unsettled balance in the account, the balance is not against the Nonconformists. In determining to carry this controversy out of the region of abstract discussion into the region of practical politics, we must be willing to incur the charge of being political Dissenters. There are many excellent people, both among Churchmen and Nonconformists, who seem to think it a crime for religious men to interfere in political struggles. How it should be possible for Nonconformists to regard the neglect of political duty as virtue, I have very great difficulty in understanding ; but for Churchmen to tell us that our religious faith should lead us to abstain from political life is, if possible, more unreasonable still : for let me ask those Churchmen, who are accustomed to charge us with the offence of being political Dissenters, what would happen if religious men ceased to be political ? Unless you believe that an assembly of atheists and of profligates will be likely to give the Church better laws than an assembly of religious men, and that a statesman who regards the Christian faith as an obsolete superstition will select better bishops than a devout and earnest Christian, you ought to be eager to fill the benches of the House of Commons with the best representatives you can find of the religious faith of the country. But if religious men should transact the political business of the nation in the House of Commons, why should religious men abstain from the political action by which the members of that House are returned ? If you think that Dissenters, when they are religious men, ought to leave politics alone, how is it that you do not try to teach this singular faith to the members of your own Church ? I never heard that there was any difficulty in inducing Churchmen to become Lords of the Admiralty, Home Secretaries, Chancellors of the Exchequer, or Prime Ministers ; I never heard that it was hard to persuade country rectors to vote for the Conservative candidates for the country ; and, what is most surprising, I have never seen leading articles in the Church newspapers in which Churchmen were condemned for accepting high political office, or in which they were told that they ought never to be seen at the hustings or at a polling booth. The *Standard* and the *Record* are filled with great horror when Nonconformists meddle with politics ; but they appear to believe that for a Churchman to be political is no crime at all. Why are Nonconformists to incur odium if they attempt to discharge their political duties ? Why is it insinuated that we, and we alone, cease to be religious when we presume to touch the affairs of the country ? We, too, are affected in our personal rights, in our property, and in all the interests

which human law can touch, by the acts of the Imperial Legislature, and by the general policy of the Government. The great traditions of England, and its greater hopes, are ours as well as yours. We, too, are Englishmen, and our religious faith does not disqualify us for rendering service to the State. If the charge that we are political Dissenters means anything, it means that all political power in this country should be vested in the hands of Churchmen ; that we should receive from them the laws by which we are to be governed, and that to Churchmen should be entrusted the administration of those laws ; that we should submit without complaint to whatever disabilities may be the penalty of Nonconformity ; that in separating ourselves from the communion of the National Church, we should renounce all claim to the rights of citizenship, and live as others in the country which gave us birth. We refuse to submit to this insulting degradation. We decline to be excluded from the political life of the nation. The way to make politics irreligious is for religious men to cease to be politicians. It is time that religious Churchmen and religious Dissenters understood each other better. We have long held these convictions ; we have endeavoured to explain them to our fellow-countrymen. At the present moment there are reasons of exceptional gravity for giving them the clearest and strongest expression, and for endeavouring to apply them in practical politics. Hitherto our chief solicitude has been to make the principles themselves intelligible to the public mind. We have a just appreciation of the principle for which we were contending, and were willing to wait till it commanded the judgment of an effective majority of the people. To resort to unnatural alliances with political opponents in order to provoke our friends to greater zeal—to take advantage of critical exigencies either in the history of the nation or in the history of political parties, in order to force our claims—was foreign to our spirit. Nor do we intend to pursue any such policy now. And yet the time has come for taking a new course. So long as we saw that the whole course of public events was moving, however slowly, towards the end that we desire, we could be satisfied with the augmentative vindication of our principles, and could hold ourselves bound by the political ties which united us with the Liberal party. But as soon as that very party—or at least its leaders—in the House of Commons entered upon a policy directly adverse to our ultimate object, these ties were loosened. As they pursued that policy, our relations to the Liberal leaders became less and less friendly. At the present moment it seems probable that we shall be driven into open hostility, and shall be compelled to form a separate and independent party in the State. Let me remind you of what has happened during the last few months. At the close of the session of 1869, a measure was carried through Parliament which promised to dissolve the power which the Established Church has exerted over the ancient grammar-schools of the country, and to rescue educational endowments which belong to the nation from ecclesiastical control. Some of these endowments the Act recognised as specially intended for the maintenance of the characteristic teachings of the Established Church. In the rest the Established Church was declared to have no special interest ; and it was provided that in the schemes which were to be drawn up for the future administration of these national endowments "the religious opinions of any person, or his attendance or non-attendance at any particular form of religious worship, shall not in any way affect his qualification for being one of the governing body of such endowment." With such a clause in the Act, we should have supposed that the Government would have taken care that at least one of the commissioners appointed to draw up the new schemes should be a Nonconformist ; but the three commissioners were all Churchmen. Nor was this an accidental oversight. I believe that it is no secret that the attention of Mr. Forster was drawn to this defect in the constitution of the commission, and he declined to remedy it. This, however, would have been of little consequence had the commissioners been ruled by the spirit of the Act which they had to administer, or if they had even taken the trouble to master the letter of the Act, and to conform to it. But in every one of the six schemes which, after lying on the table of Parliament for forty days, have become law, they have provided that a clergyman should be an *ex-officio* member of the governing body. In thirty out of the thirty-four schemes which they have issued, but which have not yet become law, a clergyman is constituted an *ex-officio* member of the

governing body. We do not object to making rectors, vicars, curates, or archdeacons governors of grammar-schools; but we object very strongly to making the clergyman of the parish or the archdeacon of the district an *ex officio* governor. The anxiety of the commissioners to perpetuate the insubordination of the grammar-schools to the Established Church has led them to exceed the powers granted them by the Act. A few weeks ago, the Central Nonconformist Committee in Birmingham received an official letter from the secretary of the commission containing the information that they had discovered that the appointment of clerical *ex officio* governors was illegal, and that they would be withdrawn from all schemes which had not received the sanction of Parliament. Could any more injurious illustration be given of the spirit by which the commission has been guided? Their zeal for clerical governors has betrayed them into a positive violation of the Act under which they are appointed, and although we might have remonstrated in vain, they have been obliged to retreat under the constraint of a legal opinion. But this offence, it may be said, cannot be charged against Her Majesty's Government. The commissioners may have been indiscreetly zealous for the Church, but the Ministry cannot be held responsible. That Mr. Gladstone is not responsible I very cheerfully acknowledge; but every one of these schemes required the sanction of the Education Department before it could be laid upon the table of the House of Commons, and they all bear the name of the Minister whom we have learned to regard with distrust—the Right Hon. W. E. Forster. Mr. Forster's attention was called to this objectionable feature in the new schemes by Mr. Edward Miall, who on August 7 inquired, and Mr. Forster replied, that the commissioners did not think they had contravened the letter of the Act by making such appointments. Mr. Forster expressed no regret that the commissioners had been so constructing the schemes as to give the Church of England a fresh hold on the grammar-school endowments; he did not even imply that the pressure of his official duties had prevented him from subjecting the schemes to careful examination; he seemed to be perfectly satisfied with what the commissioners had done. If the sanction of the department was given to these schemes without due consideration, and if Mr. Forster does not sympathise with the desire of the commissioners to create a formal link between the grammar-schools and the Established Church, he will have the opportunity next session to give the best possible proof that he regrets his oversight: let him move the commissioners to amend the six schemes which have received the sanction of Parliament by cancelling the *ex officio* clerical governors. But if the Ministry show no signs of their intention to control the policy of the commissioners—if, contrary to the spirit of the Endowed Schools Act, the great mass of the educational endowments of the nation are to be placed under the control of the Established Church—if Nonconformists are to be excluded in the future as they have been excluded in the past from grammar-school trusts—then, I think, it is time for us to say that we will not lift a finger, or raise a voice, or give a vote at the next election, merely for the sake of keeping the Liberal party in power. (Cheers.) I now come to the policy of the Government in relation to a question which has created extraordinary excitement in nearly every district of the country where school boards have been appointed under the recent Elementary Education Act. I refer to the payment out of the rates of the fees of indigent children attending denominational schools. After explaining the provisions of the Act bearing upon the payment of school fees, Mr. Dale continued: Several school boards—we know of thirteen, there may be more—passed bye-laws providing that very poor children might have free education in the board schools, but not providing for the payment of such children attending denominational schools. The department allowed these bye-laws, for they were clearly covered by the Act; but a letter was addressed to the boards informing them that:—"In the opinion of my Lords, it would not be just to deprive a parent of the right to choose the particular public elementary school to which he will send his child, because while he is compelled by these bye-laws to send his child to school, he is unable from poverty to pay his school fee: but my Lords cannot doubt that the school board will see the justice of making use of the power they possess under section 25 in favour of such parent." The position which the Government has taken is very distinct and intelligible. They declare that whenever a school board compels a child who is receiving no education to go to school to be taught reading and writing and arithmetic, the rudiments of English grammar and the outlines of English history, the parent has a moral right to demand that the money of the ratepayers should be used for the support of a school in which, in addition to these things, the child shall receive certain doctrinal teaching. There are two powerful Churches in the country—the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church—which desire to make the day-school an agency for teaching not merely the elements of secular learning, but their characteristic religious creed. The Education Department has declared that if the parent himself wishes it, or rather if, though the parent himself may not wish it, the Bible-woman, the Scripture-reader, the curate, or the priest persuades him to say that he wishes it—justice requires that when providing for the secular education of a child the ratepayers should

contribute out of the rates to the maintenance of these sectarian institutions. Mr. Forster was out of England when the department assumed this position, but he has made himself responsible for it; and those who maintain that it would be a violation of religious liberty for a school board to compel a child to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and to refuse to send the child at the expense of the ratepayers to a school where it would also be taught the theology of the Church Catechism or the theology of the Council of Trent, appeal to Mr. Forster's authority. In what the injustice would consist he has never yet explained. Nor do I see how it is possible for him to offer any explanation without confessing that the Elementary Education Act is an utter failure. Catholic bishops may protest that the religious faith of a child may be imperilled if it receives secular instruction from a heretic; but for Mr. Forster to admit that allegation is impossible. One of the chief merits which he claimed for his bill was the perfect protection afforded by the conscience clause to the religious convictions of parents. The question we have to ask Mr. Forster is a very simple one—Does he believe that his conscience clause is an effective one? Is he satisfied that it secures that the secular teaching of a public elementary school shall be free from secular bias? If he is not satisfied, let him make it more stringent. If he is satisfied, let him say distinctly that there is nothing in the secular teaching of a public elementary school to which parents can legitimately object on religious grounds, and that he declines to recognise the objections which are being made—not by the parents themselves, but by Roman Catholic prelates and Episcopalian clergymen—to compelling children to be sent to schools under the control of the ratepayers. But if there is nothing in the secular teaching of a board school which can violate the religious convictions of parents, where is the injustice of compelling a child to receive that teaching, whatever may be the religious faith of its parents? There is an injustice, it may be said, in compelling a child to receive secular instruction which has no religious colour in it. The injustice lies in refusing to enable the parent to secure the definite religious teaching which he prefers. This principle is such an astounding novelty, it involves such grave consequences, that I think some attempt should have been made by Mr. Forster and his friends to show the grounds on which it rests. We forbid no man to give religious instruction to his own children; if we did, we should violate the principles of religious liberty. We forbid no man to pay other people to give it: if we did, we should violate the principles of religious liberty. We forbid no man to receive it gratuitously from those who are willing to give it for nothing; if we did, we should violate the principles of religious liberty. But we do not acknowledge the right of the parent to require the community to pay rates towards the support of schools, not under the control of the ratepayers, in order that the child may be taught a sectarian faith. No one denies the right of a parent to provide for the religious instruction of his child; what we deny is the right of the parent to compel the State to provide for the religious instruction of the child. No one denies the right of a Church to provide for the religious instruction of the children of its adherents. What we deny is the right of the Church to demand the assistance of public money in order to enable it to make that provision. It is said, in reply, that the private subscriptions of the supporters of denominational schools provide the religious instruction for their children, and that the public money purchases only the secular teaching. If that be true, let the private subscriptions be used for the support of religious teachers, and let the rates be used for the support of schoolmasters who shall not be required to teach a sectarian faith. But every one knows that if the churches had to provide the religious teaching without the aid which they ask for from public funds under cover of payment for secular education, they would find it necessary to make considerable additions to their subscription lists. Nor is it even true that there is any guarantee that the private subscriptions shall represent that portion of a schoolmaster's time which is consumed in giving religious denominational instruction. A few months ago a deputation of which I was a member pressed Mr. Forster to introduce a clause into the New Code providing that in denominational schools, at least a sixth of the cost of maintenance should come from voluntary subscriptions. He refused to do it; and it is perfectly possible for a denominational school to be carried on without receiving a penny from denominational sources. The true policy for the Education Minister of a Liberal Government was gradually to dissociate the secular education of the people, for which alone he has again and again declared that the State is responsible, from all theological teaching. Instead of doing this, he has systematically strengthened the existing connection between the school and the Church, and has made provision out of public funds for an enormous extension of denominational schools, and for an enormous augmentation of their permanent resources. Not satisfied with all this, he is now urging school boards to subsidise denominational schools out of the rates. We had, perhaps, no right to expect, in the actual condition of the public mind, that the Government would have adopted a scheme in 1870 for diminishing the grants which the Churches were already receiving for the maintenance of their educational institutions. There was great force in the argument that it would be perilous to the cause of education, and unfair to those who had been encouraged to

establish denominational schools, suddenly to break up existing educational machinery, although it was being worked for sectarian, and not merely for educational, purposes. But for a Liberal Ministry to extend and enlarge, at the public cost, machinery conducted on a principle so vicious—to create new facilities at the public expense for maintaining it—to involve the nation still more deeply in the policy of sustaining sectarian religious teachers out of rates and taxes, this was contrary to all that we had a right to anticipate. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) It is a retrograde policy. It is a policy which has secured for the Government the enthusiastic approbation of Conservatives; but it is a policy which relieves Nonconformists from their old allegiance to the Liberal party, and requires us so to organise our political power as to prevent the Liberal party from ever inflicting a similar injury again on the privileges of religious equality. If there is one living statesman who beyond every other may be regarded as representing the spirit and traditions of Liberalism on questions of this nature, it is Earl Russell. His name is becoming unfamiliar to politicians of the younger generation, but Nonconformists can never forget the magnificent services which he has rendered the cause of religious freedom. Earl Russell has a clear and just appreciation of the true nature of the struggle in which we are engaged, and he has taken his place at our side. In a letter addressed a few days ago to Mr. Dixon, president of the National Education League, his lordship says:—"A great struggle will be made by the clergy of the Church of Rome and of the Church of England to maintain and perpetuate sectarian schools, aided by rates and by the State." And he has given his adhesion to the League because he wishes to rescue the education of the country from clerical ascendancy. With such a testimony, I have a right to say, that in organising the political power of Nonconformists in order to resist the policy of the Government, we are but directing our policy to the aims and objects which till now the policy of the Liberal party has been extending. And there is an urgent necessity why the organisation of our power should be rapid and complete. We have not a month, a day, an hour to lose. Five weeks ago the Roman Catholic archbishop and bishops of Ireland met in Dublin, and declaring themselves "the divinely constituted guardians of the spiritual interests" of their people, passed a series of resolutions on the subject of national education. A Liberal Ministry is about to pass a measure under which Imperial funds will be employed for the creation and support of elementary schools in Ireland; and the Roman Catholic archbishop and bishops declare that the schools must be placed under the control of the Roman Catholic priesthood, and must be nurseries for the Roman Catholic Church. They ask for national endowments of the Catholic faith. They ask for legislation which shall place the public schools of the greater part of Ireland under the control of the Catholic Church. They refuse to be satisfied with any measure which will not enable them at the public expense to confirm and perpetuate their authority over the intellect and heart of the Irish people. The tone in which their claim is preferred is one which has been long unfamiliar to English ears. The assumptions on which it rests the English people have finally and for ever determined to repudiate. The Catholic priesthood demand to be formally invested with authority over the discipline and management of an unknown number of the elementary schools to be established and supported by the Imperial Parliament. They further demand that Catholic trained schools should be created by the Government for the training of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. They also demand that the State should found and endow either a Catholic University in Ireland, or else one or more Catholic colleges in connection with a national university, and in the event of a Catholic college being established they demand that it shall be conducted on purely Catholic principles, and that the bishops shall have full control in all things regarding faith and morals. I want to know whether you, the Nonconformists of Manchester, will continue to give your support to the Liberal party, if the Liberal party show any signs of conceding these demands. I know your mind. In your name I will say—Rather than concede demands like that, let the Liberal party be destroyed. (Vehement cheering.) Do you regard such a concession as impossible? I believe that there is the gravest reason for apprehension. In the Elementary Education Act for England the Ministry has shown itself unwilling to provoke the hostility of the clergy of those Churches which desire to use national funds for the purposes of educating children in a sectarian faith. In the Elementary Education Bill for Scotland submitted to Parliament last year but withdrawn, they made still larger concessions than were made in the English bill to the same ecclesiastical pretensions. There is the most serious ground for apprehensions that concessions larger still will be made to the pretensions of the ecclesiastical authorities in Ireland. The position which I think that the Nonconformists of England should assume is this. We will contend side by side with the Roman Catholics of Ireland for the complete removal of the sectarian restrictions which still exist in Trinity College, Dublin. Their freedom to celebrate their worship and to teach their faith, if ever it is endangered, shall be as dear to us as our own; and, if the blind passion of Protestant bigotry in Ireland ever threaten to disturb the quiet of a Roman Catholic congregation, or to inflict harm on a Roman Catholic priest, we

will give our voice for surrounding that congregation and defending that priest with the whole force of the empire. But with the whole force of the empire also, so far as we have any influence on public legislation and policy, we are prepared to resist any claim on the part of the Roman Catholic priesthood to anything more than religious equality. When they ask for national funds for the maintenance of their religious faith, then, whatever may be the consequences, we refuse to vote them. When they ask for religious authority in common schools supported by the State, then, whatever may be the consequences, we refuse to concede it. If you intend to give effect to these principles it is not enough that they should be expressed in great meetings held in this hall. You must do your part towards diffusing information through the Liberal constituencies in every part of the kingdom. You must assist the Nonconformists of the small towns and of the rural districts to organise their strength that they may be ready to act with decisive effect at the next general election. Nor is it only that we may be ready for the next general election that I ask you to do this. I do not care to enter into nice calculations as to the precise extent to which the leaders of the Liberal party are indebted to the Nonconformists of England and Wales for their present majority in the House of Commons; but this at least is certain, that we are largely responsible for bringing the present Government into power. We are responsible for its continuance in power. If by conceding the claims of the divinely-appointed guardians of the faith and morals of the Catholic population of Ireland, the Ministry should inflict an irreparable outrage at once on the dignity of the Imperial Government and the principles of religious freedom, the guilt of the offence must rest partly on ourselves. (Loud cheers.) But for us it is more than doubtful whether Mr. Gladstone's Government would have been in office at the present moment. If, when Parliament reassembles, there are any indications that the Irish policy of Ministers is to be determined by the demands of the Roman Catholic priesthood, there is only one course before us, to try to secure, at the earliest possible moment, such a defeat of the Government as shall render it impossible for them to remain in office. The experience of the session of 1870 has shown us that it will not be safe for us to rely on the effect of the most vigorous protests even of a majority of the Liberal members of the House of Commons against a measure which the majority have resolved to carry. I well remember the night when one of the representatives of this city, Mr. Jacob Bright, was followed into the lobby by a clear majority of Liberal members, and the amendment which he moved to one of the most unsatisfactory clauses of the Education Bill was resisted and defeated by the Government in the teeth of the great body of its own friends. We must not, if we can help it, see that game played again in an Education Bill for Ireland, and I call upon you, the Nonconformists of Manchester, to assist in covering this county and the neighbouring counties with a network of Nonconformist organisations, through which, should the occasion arise, the country and the House of Commons may learn that the party ties between ourselves and the Liberal leaders are finally dissolved, and that Liberal members who shrink from using the first opportunity for showing their want of confidence in the Ministry, and dislodging it from power, must expect to lose the confidence of their Nonconformist constituents. The immediate necessity which is laid upon us for organising our political power, and determining on a definite line of political action, has been created by the recent policy of the Government. But, year by year, the ultimate questions involved in the history and position of the Nonconformists is assuming more definite outlines, and attracting larger public attention. Before long that question will divide the great political parties in the State, and the discussions in which we are now engaged are preparing the mind of the country for the supreme struggle. I frankly confess, that I never appear on a public platform to discuss the relations between the Church and State but with reluctance and pain. I am far more vividly conscious of the religious sympathies which unite the majority of Nonconformists with vast numbers of the clergy and laity of the Established Church, than of the theological, ecclesiastical, and political differences which separate us. To be regarded as an enemy by men for whom I have the deepest affection and admiration; to be charged by such men with pursuing a policy which, in relation to the Church, is a policy of confiscation and sacrilege, and in relation to the State a policy of atheism, is to me a source of keen distress. But we have no choice. Should we be successful, we believe that no injury would be inflicted either on the Church or the State. We utterly reject the dogma that a nation ceases to be a Christian nation when it ceases to assert the Christian faith by the authority of public law, and to maintain the ministers from the national resources. Its Christianity depends upon the intensity and purity of the Christian life which dwells in the hearts of its people. We are Nonconformists. We are political Nonconformists—not because we wish to make the political life of England less religious, but because we wish to make it more religious; and we intend, God blessing us, unmoved by the storm of hostility, of misrepresentation, and of slander which our great enterprise may provoke, to pursue it until the time shall come, and it is not far distant, when the principles of which it is our glory to be the repre-

sentatives and the guardians, shall control the legislation and the policy of our country. (Loud cheers.)

On Monday evening, Mr. Richard, M.P., delivered an address to a crowded meeting at Cardiff on education, dealing with the subject as it referred specially to Nonconformists, whom he strongly urged to exert themselves energetically in order to obtain a purely unsectarian system of instruction.

MR. MIALL, M.P., ON THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

The ceremony of inaugurating the handsome new schools which have recently been erected in connection with Bath-lane Church, Newcastle, was on Friday evening performed by Mr. Edward Miall, M.P. for Bradford. The building, which is constructed from a very pretty Gothic design by Mr. Thos. Oliver, is made to harmonise nicely with the church by means of the octagonal spire which springs from the centre of the roof, while the stonework, known as "sneck-walling," is also embellished with ashlar dressings to correspond with the same erection. The spacious interior—85ft. by 54ft.—is well filled with class-rooms, and every convenience for the accommodation of 400 scholars, and can hardly fail to prove of immense service to the densely-populated district in which it is placed. The tea preceding the opening was partaken of by between 500 and 600 persons. Afterwards the company adjourned to the chapel, which was well filled, a large number of ladies being present. The chair was occupied by the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Rutherford.

The CHAIRMAN opened the proceedings. He said when it was determined to build this church, they also contemplated to build day and Sunday schools for the education of the young. They had been rather long in fulfilling that promise but, they were a band of spiritual volunteers. They had no money from the Government, and they asked none, either for the building of churches or schools. The building, he was happy to say, however, was almost free from debt—only about 500/- or 600/- would be wanted. In the matter of school education, they were determined to hold one united secular and separate religious education. Their view of religious liberty was that every man should pay for his own religion, and that nobody should be taxed for another's. The school was not for Congregational purposes; they wished to teach no denominationalism; and they hoped Parliament would soon recognise the principle they had set before them: thoroughly united secular and separate religious education—separate religious education being given by volunteers. (Applause.) They were willing to hand over the school to the school board, or any other board that would carry on the principle for which they contended. He then went on to point out the education that would be given in the schools, and hoped they would be ultimately successful. (Applause.) They rejoiced to have in their midst that night Mr. Miall—(loud cheers)—whom they were anxious to hear. It was his privilege to introduce him to them; and he was sure that they would give him a hearty welcome. (Renewed applause.) They recognised the immense service that he had rendered to the great cause of free thought and religion. "A Free Church in a Free State," had been the motto of his life. It had been his life long endeavour to free religion from its fetters, and from the degradation that those fetters brought upon it; and next to the possession of "A Free Church in a Free State" was that of "Free Schools in a Free State." (Loud applause.)

Mr. MIALL, who was received with loud cheers, said:—

Dr. Rutherford, ladies and gentlemen,—I don't know why my friend who is in the chair has singled me out for the discharge of that duty which devolves upon me this evening. I have been delighted so look over the building that the energy, the liberality, and the religion of himself and his people have raised in this town; and however inconvenient it may have been for me personally to be present this evening, I regard myself as richly rewarded for remaining to take part in this ceremonial by what I have seen around me. (Applause.) It has proved to me—what, indeed, I have never doubted—that where there is a will there is a way; that when men are thoroughly intent on conferring benefits upon their fellow-men, and are ready to sacrifice themselves in order that others may participate in the benefits which without their energy they would not enjoy, there is always, may I say, a providential arrangement of circumstances that is apt to that design, that answers to that effort; and I have no doubt that the school which I am to declare open to-night will very soon be free of any encumbrance, and will put in operation, and successful operation, all the advantages of the most advantageous mechanism which can be provided for it. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I take a deeper interest in this experiment, because it is in exact accordance with all the principles that I have ever maintained. I don't believe that the State, as a State, is competent to undertake the religious instruction of the people. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) Remember, it is no abstract body, but a concrete body, representing all citizens, and the work which it does is that only which can be properly done by a representative body that shall not traverse, in the course of its action, the will, or at any rate the consciences, of any one of its subjects. (Hear, hear.) I am glad to hear that you confine your instruction, or are to confine your instruction in the adjoining schoolroom, to what is called secular education. Don't be frightened—perhaps the warning is utterly unnecessary in this place, but it is not unnecessary elsewhere—don't be frightened at a mere word. (Hear, hear.) Secular things belong to time, religious

things belong to that which is beyond time. To teach that which is secular—that which is adapted to guide our footsteps through the various temporal scenes through which we pass—is certainly to do a work which needs to be done in our population. And if we do not undertake to associate with that the higher duty of teaching men's consciences, and attempting to open up their spiritual nature, all that can be said about it is this, that it is impossible that all things should be properly achieved by the same kind of machinery. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) No doubt there are those even amongst true Churchmen who believe that mere secular teaching, in day-schools, is devoid of that promise which they would have if there could be associated with such teaching the teaching also of religion. Now, I hope it will not be necessary for me not only to admit, but to insist upon, the necessity of associating religion with education. No education, in my judgment, can be complete which does not, whilst it opens the faculties to necessary knowledge connected with time, at the same time open the moral sentiments to those great subjects which elevate manhood, and which prepare it for a future career of enjoyment and of duty. (Loud applause.) But there are two ways of teaching religion. There may be that of constant example, and there may be that of mere perfunctory precept. A religious schoolmaster will be, *ceteris paribus*, the best of schoolmasters. He need never open his mouth on religious topics to give religious instruction; but children whose minds are always quick to perceive, and especially to perceive the moral aspect of things, will soon ascertain when a schoolmaster does all that he does in conscientious deference to the will of God. The very presence of the man will breathe something like sanctity over the school which he manages, and every scholar will feel that his teacher, whatever may be his other qualifications, is guided by a conscientious reverence in all things for the will of his Maker. This kind of teaching in schools, religious teaching, I hope will increase rather than diminish—"Hear, hear," and applause)—and if we can only train up, and bring out, and develop a large class of religious schoolmasters who shall make their Christianity felt in all their arrangements, and in all their own bearings, then I think we have done, or shall do, all that is needful, and all that is practicable, in regard to religion in our day-schools. (Applause.) But I object to what is called religious instruction in our day-schools, especially in day-schools that receive the support of the State—(applause)—the support of us all. I object to it because I don't believe that the State can properly train up the kind of religious teacher that is supposed, at all events, to do the work which he is called upon by the State to do. (Hear, hear.) There is nothing more deleterious to the consciences of young children than to have religion drilled into them by mere mechanism. There is nothing so likely to spoil what I may call the sensibility of the religious nature, and so completely to shut it out against those influences that I think would be breathed into us by all surrounding objects, as that of continually making religion—no religion in its proper and higher sense, but theology—the topic of a schoolboy's or a schoolgirl's lessons, and giving them to understand that their religious nature is being cultivated by being stuffed and drugged with catechisms and creeds. (Hear, hear.) Men are calling upon us from every part of the country almost to associate religion with education, because no education can be complete without it. Well, the ground which they take is the ground in which I thoroughly concur, and which I think cannot be controverted with success—namely, that the whole man needs education, and that to take merely the intellectual, or even the moral nature, and to neglect entirely the spiritual, would be to inflict great injury upon those on whom the experiment is tried. But the point is assumed that the schoolmasters whom the State will provide, or the school boards provide, will be competent to teach all that they profess to teach; or that they will be in any way thoroughly spiritually interested in doing that part of the work which the generality of the people have called upon them to do. I don't believe, in the first place, that the State is bound to provide religious instruction for the people. (Applause.) I don't believe, in the second place, that it can provide religious instruction for the people. (Loud applause.) I think that its attempt to provide it is simply an imposition—an imposition upon our judgment, and an imposition upon our feelings, and therefore I am extremely sorry that, in consequence of one question getting so mixed up with another when this topic was before Parliament, that it did not seem possible to dig into the House of Commons the idea of a division of labour—the State doing that which is secular; the parent and the Churches doing that which is spiritual. (Applause.) Undoubtedly the religious instruction of a child devolves primarily upon the parent, and where a parent is himself deficient in the power or the capability of communicating the instruction, then it devolves upon the Churches; and the Churches, let me tell you, have never yet had the whole responsibility of this work fairly thrown upon them. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) When it is supposed—and facts do not answer for suppositions—that the children of this country in the common day-schools, or in denominational schools, as such, are brought up in the fear of God, and in the knowledge and in the love of those truths which are presented to us in the person and in the work of the Son of God; when it is supposed that that kind of religious education is given to the people in day-schools, the supposition must be regarded, as far as I can see, as utterly inconsistent and incompatible with the facts of the case. (Applause.) There may be here and there a man so capable of instilling Divine truth into young hearts that he shall be successful, even in the midst of school engagements and school hours, of awakening religious susceptibilities, and of so opening the mind to religious truth that that mind, when the truth is preached, shall receive it and profit by it. But ordinarily speaking—I speak from my own knowledge, and my own knowledge on this subject is not altogether confined to theory—ordinarily speaking, the religion which is communicated by a schoolmaster to school-children, as a part of his duty, is utterly worthless for the guidance of children during their future days. (Hear, hear.) Oh, but it is said not only that the Government must take in hand this great work in association with the education of the children, but it must do so upon principles so utterly peculiar that I defy anyone to bring out from those

principles anything like consistent philosophy. For example, they say that when the compulsory system comes into operation it will be unjust, a violation of religious equality, on the part of the State, to compel any child to go to school where he will be taught things—religious things—to which his parents conscientiously object. I am glad to find that those who rule over us are so exceedingly advanced in their knowledge and in their deference to conscientious objections. (Laughter and applause.) It has not been so long. (Renewed laughter and applause.) There has been a great want, I may say, of sensitiveness on the part of those who have the ecclesiastical ascendancy with regard to the conscientious objections of those persons who object to Church ascendancy. (Hear, hear.) We have seen it in Church-rates; we may possibly see it again in school rates. (Hear, hear.) But I, for example—who have been preaching freedom of conscience all my public life, and who, I think, understand something about the bearings of that principle in its application to daily life—I can see no right whatever that a parent who throws upon the State the responsibility of bringing up his child in secular knowledge should also demand that religious knowledge should be communicated at the expense of the State. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) By all means let us treat tender consciences with as much deference, and caution, and tenderness as we can; but a beggar—I don't use the term in its offensive sense—but when a beggar, who receives the offer of his children being educated at the expense of the community in all things that are fitted to guide that child, and to give it a chance in its future earthly career, takes upon him to say no, he can't consent to receive that favour unless another favour is bestowed upon him—namely, that the child shall be brought up in the distinctive tenets of the theology of which the parent approves—then I must say that to me the whole thing savours a great deal of conventionality and hypocrisy. (Hear, hear.) For, generally speaking, the sphere from which those children will be taken to be educated by the State, especially the more indigent of children—generally speaking, if there were a real spiritual concern to give to those children religious instruction, the parent at home would be the proper person to convey that instruction to the minds of the children. But having neglected all parental duties, at least those which are most primary and obligatory, I do not think that when the State comes forward to supply a want which has been created by parental indifference, or by parental inability, the parent can fairly stand up and claim that public money shall be used, not with reference to the consciences of those who will have to provide the money, but simply with reference to his own conscience. I am glad to find there is so much conscience among that class of people. (Laughter and applause.) I would earnestly entreat that they will cultivate more and more of it daily; and I believe, if they do so they will be able to supply the deficiency which the State cannot supply to their children without violating great fundamental principles. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) But suppose that the parents can't do this, whose is the next duty? Why, surely the religious societies. What are our churches for? What are they worth if they are not watching over the interests of the rising generation? Is it not possible for them to provide that spiritual instruction should be given by spiritual people!—(applause)—not because they are paid to do it, but because they have the love of the work in their own hearts. (Hear, hear.) And let me just suggest, as I have suggested elsewhere, that here there is a noble sphere for the exercise of the peculiar aptitude belonging to the nature of women that may step in and perform this service more efficiently than any other class of the community. (Hear, hear.) I believe that when the churches are thrown entirely upon their own resources, and are not blinded by make-believes of the State and of the Legislature, and when they see things just as they are, they will rise up and combine and think and organise machinery that is adapted to the peculiar nature of the case, and not deliver over children to the teaching of schoolmasters particularly, but deliver them over to the teaching of those whose hearts are burning to communicate religious instruction to the rising generation. I am very glad to find that in connection with the school adjoining this place of worship there will be a Sunday-school—a Sunday-school, I have no doubt, far more efficient for religious purposes in consequence of the secular instruction which you will daily give in the same place. (Applause.) That Sunday-school you will not put into the hands of the schoolmaster who will conduct the day education, but it will be, as it were, the burden of the whole religious people who are associated and organised here, and consequently will be done with something like the zeal and freedom and earnestness which all religious instruction ought to be instinct with, and without which religious instruction is not likely to have its proper effect upon the spiritual nature of the children. (Applause.) Now, let me say that perhaps very few men have been more disappointed than I have been that this was not the aim of the Government in the measure it recently passed. (Hear, hear.) I, for one, am quite willing to admit, nay, I am forward to acknowledge, that the clergy of this country have done a great deal in connection with the education of the people of late years. They did not begin the work. I may say that those who were not members of the Establishment—at any rate, those who did not care to maintain the principles of the Establishment—walked forward in the march of education, and that, after they had so far succeeded as to give a promise of further success, sectarianism stepped in, and stepped in as a rival to a freer and broader system of education than it seemed it could put up with. But, apart from that altogether, I am quite willing to admit that it would have been ungracious on the part of the State, on taking the education of the whole people into its hands, to have entirely given the go-by to those schools which had been created and sustained partly by voluntary liberality, and certainly by large sacrifices on behalf of some of the clergy. But I see no reason in the world why the State system should not have been set down, which would leave those schools just in the position in which they were; and when these schools one by one failed of accomplishing the end for which they were intended, they could easily have glided into the national system; and the principles which were laid down in law for the guidance of education by board schools, might have been extended to those

schools in due time without the infliction of any wrong upon any human being. (Applause.) Well, that has not been done. That is one great fault in the Elementary Education Act for which I think the unwise of the present Government is responsible. But not only that: there was not only a determination to main those schools in constant rivalry with the schools of the State, but there was likewise a determination to give those schools every possible advantage in the race against the schools which the State itself had set up. The year and a half's grace or more—I forget what was precisely the time—but the inviting the denominations to come forward in their sectarianism, and for their denominational schools, in order that they might obtain grants for building purposes, has been frightfully expensive and a terrible mistake, and I am sorry to say it was intended to give to denominationalism an advantage over nationalists in this matter, which the very Act itself was intended—was drawn to prevent. (Applause.) Well, but not only that; when the Act was passed, when through a sort of combination between those who had the management of the bill and the other side of the House, a large majority of men gave their assent to the Elementary Education Act—even then there might have been room for liberal administration, and it was supposed that the administration would be so liberal as in the course of time to establish the national principle all over the land. (Applause.) I grieve to say that the administration has been as denominational and sectarian as any of those who have rushed forward and claimed the building grant could have wished; I grieve to say that in many particulars there has been an offensive, and, I may say, an insolent, display of determination to oppose the national system by setting up the denominational, and as far as possible place the national system so that it would be practically impossible to work it in many parts of the country. (Applause.) Well, what are we to do under such circumstances? Can we let this thing go on as it is, because it is not only this but secondary education that likewise comes under the same blighting and withering influence? Here are our grammar-schools for which we passed an Act, in 1860, I think—an Act which was very liberal in its provisions, and for the carrying of which we are certainly indebted to the present Vice-President of the Council. But he appointed a commission to watch over those schools which are not to be sectarian, of three persons whose will is to be law, and those three persons are all of them members of one religious body—"Hear, hear," and "Shame")—and when he is remonstrated with on account of doing this, he gives as his reason that he has in fact more faith in the liberality and the catholicity of the men whom he appoints to this place than he would have—even in Dissenters. Well, what do these men do? As soon as ever they begin to draw up schemes for the grammar-schools that are endowed, they also begin to manifest their tendency towards the same sectarian and denominational object. They put upon every one of the schemes that has hitherto received the sanction of Parliament—there are only six at present—thirty or forty have not yet received the sanction of Parliament, but they put on almost all the schemes the clergyman of the parish as an *ex-officio* governor; and when I asked the question in Parliament whether this was to be the principle upon which this Act was to be carried out, I was told that the commissioners did not regard this as incompatible or inconsistent with either the letter or the spirit of the Act; and then driven, as they have been, to consult their own legal men, they have been told not only that this is incompatible with the spirit of the law, but is inconsistent with the letter of the law—(Hear, hear)—and that what they have done in the way of sectarianism has been utterly illegal, and that they cannot maintain the principle which they intended to thrust upon us. (Applause.) Now, it will be said to us, and I have no doubt has been said over and over again, that these are very little things that we are contending about. Aye, they are little things in themselves; but they are little things through which we can see the tendency of the whole system as now arranged. In themselves they might be contemptible; as indications of what is to come they are not so contemptible. They are very significant, and I say we must take our stand at the beginning—*principia obsta*. We must resist whilst we can. We must tell this Government which we have done so much to put and keep in place, that we will not be dealt with after this delusive and I may say tyrannical fashion. (Hear, hear.) We can't submit to have our principles trampled down in the commencement of large national systems, in order that those large national systems may be without the vitality of those principles in all future times. It is a great question. (Applause.) It is a question of great depth and importance, and of the deepest interest to the intellectual and spiritual progress of this country, whether the whole population shall be put under sectarian influence, or whether it shall be put under the influence of the great principles of religious equality. (Loud applause.) Well, I hope we shall all of us do our part. (Applause.) I rejoice to see that you are doing yours—doing it in the best possible way—(applause)—providing your own school; placing it upon right and sound principles; caring nothing for the taunts of men who, with religion always on their lips, sometimes discover that it is not over influential in their lives—(Hear, hear)—politicians who care for religion rather for political than for spiritual purposes. (Hear, hear.) I rejoice that you can lift up your face honestly in the faces of such men, and point them to what you are doing as an exposition of the reality, the truth, the power, the justice of your own principles. (Applause.) I wish it were done in every quarter of this kingdom. I only wish that Christian men, and especially enlightened Christian men, would take to heart the state of their country at this crisis of its career, and would determine that they would bring their whole Christianity to bear in liberating all the institutions which are intended to bear upon the education of the mind and conscience of the people. (Loud applause.) They would do so best by leaving religion to its own resources—its own resources being the energy, the hope, the faith, the self-sacrifice of its own people. (Applause.) Go forward in the way upon which you have started. God will bless you assuredly in your future work as he has done in your past work. Go forward, and the time will come, I hope, when over all the breadth of this land there will be instances and exemplifications of this mighty principle that ought to be acknowledged by all

who know the power of Christianity—that although religious education is necessary to the full development of the human being, a religion taught by a priesthood is not at all necessary to that development. (Hear, hear.) I have the greatest pleasure now in declaring that the schools, directly adjoining this chapel, will be opened from this time for all work which it is intended to perform. (Mr. Miall resumed his seat amid loud cheering.)

Mr. GEO. LUCKSLEY next addressed the meeting, and spoke in favour of national unsectarian education—education on the basis of the interest of the ratepayers, which was essentially secular. That was the only true plan, and as they had truth and justice on their side, they must ultimately succeed.

Mr. CARVELL WILLIAMS being called upon, urged the necessity for practical as well as theoretical voluntaryism, stating that many Churchmen were now closely watching the working of Nonconformist institutions, to satisfy themselves as to the advisability of resorting to voluntaryism instead of relying on the Establishment. He also suggested that there was a danger that too much would be expected from school boards in respect to education, and that Christian Churches and also parents, would not adequately feel their responsibility.

Mr. WM. SMITH said a few words with reference to the financial position of the schools. They had cost some 2,215*l.*, and towards that sum they had received about 1,600*l.*, so that there was a deficiency yet of about 600*l.* There had been certain promises made of further help, but even with these they still wanted more money. He hoped they would come forward in support of the schools, and also of their other school, for they meant to have another school, and that too in a very short time, and it would be in the Shieldfield.

Mr. JOSEPH COWEN, jun., next spoke, and urged the practical application of the remarks they had heard. How did they stand in this town? They had a school board. He did not want to speak disrespectfully of it; he was a member of that distinguished corporation. (Laughter.) It consisted of fifteen members, five representing the Church, five unsectarians, and five between those parties—sort of buffers to them. (Loud laughter.) Those gentlemen occasionally—on small occasions—(laughter)—when the matter was not important—sided with the five unsectarians, but on all important occasions they sided with the Church party. (Laughter.) The board had decided to put the compulsory powers of the Education Act into force. Their opponents in the board thought the children whose parents could not afford to pay ought to be sent to denominational schools, and that the ratepayers of Newcastle, who consisted of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and infidels, ought to contribute to the payment of the education of those children in such schools. He and his colleagues said that was an infringement of the doctrine of religious freedom and equality. (Applause.) They were not only opposed to it in theory, but in practice, and he never meant to pay a rate for that purpose. (Cheers.) So long as there were twenty honest Nonconformists in Newcastle who refused to pay that rate, they would stop the school board's operation. (Cheers.) If 200 Nonconformists throughout the country would take the same course of action, they would upset Mr. Forster's apple-cart. (Laughter.) That gentleman might canter at a good pace, but he would scarcely be able to canter over the consciences of two hundred resolute men. (Applause.) If the Government acted as they had been doing lately, they must oppose it—there was no other course of action—they must oppose it; they must endanger its existence. (Applause.) The Nonconformists would not submit to be trampled on. The Government had been taught a wholesome lesson in recent elections. He hoped they would lose Dover, as a few more losses would probably open their eyes. (Applause.)

The Rev. H. T. ROBJOHNS, in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Miall, said that Mr. Forster had committed the country to the extension and development of the denominational system of education as against the system of national, which all true Liberals have advocated since the beginning. The consequence would be—or rather was—most serious. They had in Ireland a system which was most satisfactory to every liberal-minded man. He had not time to go into that question that night; but would point to the fact that they had combined secular and religious instruction. Now, what did the Catholics say? They had said they would not have this mixed system of education either in the Universities or in the schools, and they were, in short, asking that the schools shall not be handed over to the people as at present, or even to the Roman Catholics, but they wanted to hand them over to the Roman Catholic clergy. In fact, the young in Ireland were to be handed over to the sole charge of the Roman Catholic priesthood. (A Voice: "Never.") He (Mr. Robjohns) also said "never."

Mr. R. S. WATSON, in seconding the motion, had great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Miall amongst them, as it afforded him an opportunity of stating that the body to which he belonged (the Friends), who were opposed to Church and State, had not been attended to by their representatives in Parliament as well as they could desire.

Mr. MIALL briefly acknowledged the compliment and proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was seconded by Mr. S. E. HILLS and carried with acclamation. The meeting then separated.